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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: JUNE 15, 2009

Summary: The government's order to launch a "decisive offensive against Baitullah Mehsud," chief of the banned Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and his allies in FATA dominated headlines in all newspapers on Monday. Reports and photographs of a powerful explosion at a busy market in Dera Ismail Khan (NWFP) killing nine people also received front page coverage. Newspapers reported that the "missiles from a drone killed at least three people in South Waziristan," however, a military spokesman "denied" the report and termed the occurrence as some "sort of explosion." Several major dailies highlighted report that the "Air Force jets and helicopter gunships pounded suspected positions of militants in Bajaur Agency." PM's Financial Advisor Shaukat Tarin's statement that the "government may seek \$4 billion IMF loan in case of a delay in the arrival of funds pledged by the Friends of Pakistan forum" received prominent display in all newspapers.

Most major Urdu dailies ran in-depth editorials on the federal budget for the financial year of 2009-10. English language newspapers editorialized a host of other subjects including Iran's presidential elections, the ongoing military operation against Taliban militants and so forth. Commenting on Ahmedinejad's triumph, the prestigious English daily, "Dawn," observed that he "now has a chance to draw confidence from his stunning victory, take steps to normalize relations with the West, especially America, and respond positively to Obama's overture to the Muslim world." The Lahore-based liberal English daily, "Daily Times," observed that "if Iran tempers its policy or even if Mr. Ahmadinejad decides to tone down his aggressive rhetoric, it is important that the real ruler of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenai, is on board." However, the second-largest nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt," continued its usual U.S.-bashing, and maintained that the "satanic trio of India, U.S. and Israel have hatched loathsome conspiracies to distract our military and government leaderships from Indian war mongering to a military operation against our own people, which is not the only solution to the problem of terrorism." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"'Decisive Offensive' Ordered Against Baitullah Mehsud" "Dawn"  
(06/15)

"The government announced on Sunday that a 'decisive offensive' will be launched against Baitullah Mehsud, Chief of the banned Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), dismantle his network, and his associates, NWFP Governor Owais Ghani said at a press conference in Islamabad on Sunday night. Governor Ghani said the army had been

ordered to launch a crackdown on militants in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. 'Details and the strategy of the operation will be decided by the army,' he said. He said Baitullah was the root of the problem and suicide bombers were being trained by him. He said it was the responsibility of every government to establish its writ, protect people's lives and property and maintain law and order."

"Tribal Warlord Vows To Take On TTP Chief" "The Nation" (06/15)

"A new militia leader has emerged in Pakistan to openly challenge Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan leader Baitullah Mehsud for the first time from within his own tribe, marking the start of a bloody confrontation in the wild Waziristan region that could have profound consequences for both Pakistan and the West. In his first interview with Western news reporters, Qari Zainuddin vowed this week to wipe out Mehsud and rescue Pakistan from a reign of terror that has pushed the nuclear-armed U.S. ally toward collapse. Zainuddin charged that Mehsud, who is the leader of the Pakistani Taliban, had betrayed both his Muslim religion and the Mehsud tribe of his native South Waziristan, which borders Afghanistan."

"9 Killed In D.I. Khan Blast" "The News" (06/15)

"Nine people were killed and over 40 injured when a powerful explosion ripped through a busy market in Dera Ismail Khan on Sunday, Source said. The blast smashed the windowpanes of the nearby shops and houses, creating panic in the whole area."

"Suspected U.S. Drone Kills Three In South Waziristan" "Dawn," "The News" (06/15)

"A suspected U.S drone aircraft fired a missile at a vehicle carrying Taliban in Pakistan's South Waziristan region on Sunday, killing three militants, a tribal leader and an intelligence official said.... In a statement, however, a spokesman for the ISPR denied drone attack in South Waziristan Agency on Sunday. He said it was some sort of explosion and not drone attack."

"Militant Positions In Bajaur, Darra Adamkhel Hit" "Dawn" (06/15)

"Air force jets and helicopter gunships pounded suspected positions of militants in Salarzai and Nawagai areas of Bajaur Agency on Sunday as the armed forces expanded their operation in the region. At least nine militants were killed and several others injured, officials said."

"Govt. Seeks IMF Loan To Bridge Resource Gap" "Dawn" (06/15)

"Pre-empting possible delays in external flows, Pakistan has asked the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a \$4 billion stand-by loan to finance the yawning budget gap in the year 2009-10 in case multilateral donors fail to release the pledged amount to Islamabad.

'This facility is insurance, which can be used in case the assistance from the multilateral donors or friendly countries delayed or does not arrive,' Adviser to Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin told newsmen in the post-budget press conference in Islamabad on Sunday."

"Security Forces Continue Advance In FR Bannu" "Dawn" (06/15)

"Security forces continued their advance on militant hideouts in the Janikhel area of Frontier Region of Bannu on Sunday. Curfew also remained imposed in Bannu city on the sixth day of the military operation."

"Major Operation In Malakand Completed: Mukhtar" "Daily Times" (06/15)

"The major military operation in Swat and other areas of Malakand division has been completed and only small, partial offensives are still being carried out, Defence Minister Ahmed Mukhtar said in an interview with a private TV channel on Sunday.

"Pakistan Showing Considerable Resolve: Gen. Petraeus" "Dawn" (06/15)

"While the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated, Pakistan has

demonstrated considerable resolve in fighting the extremists, says U.S. Central Command Chief Gen. David Petraeus. 'In Pakistan, there is no question I think at this point that the Pakistanis see very clearly the existential threat that is posed to their country by the extremists,' Gen. Petraeus told a seminar in Washington."

"Halt In Operation To Be Suicidal, ANP Warns" "The News" (06/15)

"Awami National Party (ANP) is totally opposed to a let-up in the ongoing campaign to eliminate militants, warning any pause or laxity at this juncture could be suicidal for Pakistan as a nation, ANP's Senior Vice-President Haji Ghulam Ahmad Bilour, during an informal chat with 'The News' said."

"15 Suspects Held In Nowshera" "The News" (06/15)

"Police and Elite Force in a joint search operation on Sunday arrested 15 suspected militants and as many proclaimed offenders, recovering huge quantities of arms and ammunitions from their possessions, district Police Officer (DPO) Abdullah Khan claimed."

"Taliban Punish Family For Supporting Military" "The News" (06/15)

"The militants caused almost Rupees 7 million loss to a family by torching their four houses and domestic goods in Behrain area of Swat Valley for their support to security forces."

"Israel Accepts Limited, Unarmed Palestinian State" "The News" (06/15)

"Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday endorsed for the first time the creation of a Palestinian state after weeks of pressure from Washington. 'If we have the guarantees on demilitarization and if the Palestinians recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people, then we arrive at a solution based on a demilitarized Palestinian state alongside Israel,' Netanyahu said during a key address on the Middle East peace process."

"JI For End To Pro-U.S. Policies" "The Nation" (06/15)

"Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Chief Munawar Hassan on Sunday demanded of the government to revise its pro-U.S. foreign policy. Addressing a press conference in Karachi, he said, 'peace cannot be established in Pakistan and Afghanistan without the withdrawal of American and NATO forces.'"

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"Ahmadinejad's Triumph," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (06/15)

"With Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's stunning victory in Friday's election, the world looks to Iran with both hope and anxiety.... Ahmadinejad now has a chance to draw confidence from his stunning victory, take steps to normalize relations with the West, especially America, and respond positively to Obama's overtures to the Muslim world. If he adopts a moderate course in domestic and foreign policies, tones down his rhetoric, liberalizes the domestic scene and pulls his country out of diplomatic isolation, Ahmadinejad will find that Iran can play a positive role in Middle Eastern affairs."

"President Ahmadinejad Back In The Saddle," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (06/15)

"For the outside world, however, the victory of Mr. Ahmadinejad was a foregone conclusion. The Spiritual Leader, Ayatollah Khamenai, with all his overwhelming supra-parliamentary powers, was on his side, as were the dreaded moral police called basij. It must however be granted that the countryside loved Mr. Ahmadinejad and voted for him.... Perhaps it is just as well that Mr. Ahmadinejad will be in charge as Iran responds to the new policy posture that the U.S. and its Western allies are preparing in the region. If Iran tempers its policy or even if Mr. Ahmadinejad decides to tone down his aggressive rhetoric, it is important that the real ruler of Iran,

Ayatollah Khamenai, is on board."

"U.S. Satisfaction Over Withdrawal Of Troops From The Indian Border," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (06/15)

"American Central Command Chief General David Petraeus has said that Pakistan has redeployed its Indian border forces to the western border to fight terrorists.... The satanic trio of India, America and Israel have hatched loathsome conspiracies to distract our military and government leaderships from Indian war mongering to a military operation against our own people, which is not the only solution to the problem of terrorism.... The American satisfaction over redeployment of the forces to western border is obvious because this redeployment will fulfill the objectives of America and India."

"Victory of Ahmadinejad," an editorial in the Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (06/15)

"The victory of President Ahmadinejad in the latest Iranian presidential election partially could be credited to the Americans for their support to his challenger. President Ahmadinejad also benefited from his hard-hitting anti-Israel and anti-American rhetoric. The U.S. was expecting success of his opponent Mr. Mousvi, but he could muster only 33 percent of Iranian votes. It is yet to be seen what impact this presidential election will leave on the international politics and on this region."

"A Sweeping Win," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (06/15)

"Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad retains presidency following general elections that brought a record 85 percent of eligible voters to the polling booths, signaling the continuation of current policies, much to the shock of the U.S. and other Western countries."

"Cantonment In Swat," an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (06/15)

"Ordinarily, given our peculiar perspective on stationing forces where there are none before, the presidential decision would have invited some criticism. But that is not the case for a cantonment in Swat where the people have seen with their own eyes innocent persons being branded as spies and are beheaded, or hanged from trees or flogged in full public view by barbaric forces let loose on innocent citizenry in the name of Islam. What we have on our hands today is not a civil war that the people are divided and there should be a debate on the need and justification of pitching a garrison in Swat on a permanent basis. It is a case of putting on ground a big, unassailable check-post to check the marauding hordes of mercenary forces. And the sooner it is done the better it would be to help facilitate the early return of the IDPs."

"Bannu - The Prelude?," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/15)

"There are at least two battles against the Taliban happening simultaneously, they are separate but at the same time interconnected. Though we lack any form of independent verification of what the military spokespersons tell us, it does seem reasonable to infer from their statements that the battle on the ground is going the way of our armed forces.... The second battle is for 'hearts and minds' and includes the propaganda war being fought on both sides. Here, the battle is fought across a national arena with the shock-troops of the Taliban using the loudspeakers of local mosques to get their message across - and very effectively.... The competencies that the military are gaining are not matched by a similar learning curve among the politicians who are their nominal masters. This incongruity in developmental terms makes the coordination of thought and action between the two entities difficult at best, and perennially dysfunctional - which brings us to the battle for Bannu.... We can win the battle for Bannu, and Waziristan if we want to; but bringing the competency gap between the two institutions fighting for national survival is another matter entirely. The military has begun to find itself again; whilst civilian governance is still throwing its toys around the

playpen."

"Operation Now In South Waziristan After Swat," an editorial in Hyderabad based liberal and independent Sindhi daily "Ibrat" (cir. 80,000) (06/15)

"Had the Pakistan Army launched the offensive in Swat with a well-thought-out plan and proper intelligence information, the massive IDPs issue would have been avoided. We believe this war against terrorism can be succeeded provided that the government takes the people of this country on board, as the civilian casualties can give a dangerous blow to this struggle."

"Admission Of Innocent Killing," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (06/15)

"Like many American officials, American Central Command Chief General David Petraeus has also admitted that innocent people are being killed in drone attacks.... Now that even General Petraeus has admitted and understood facts on innocent killing, what is hindering cessation of drone attacks...? American authorities should now apologize from Pakistan and relatives of the innocent victims, pay them monetary compensation and take their war, which is not Pakistan's anyway, from our soil to some other place."

"A Generation Lost," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (06/15)

"The police claim that the 14-year-old from Landi Kotal, who was caught with an explosives-laden suicide jacket and a hand grenade, was trained in Afghanistan by the TTP.... Would-be aggressor though he may be, Sulaiman and countless others such as him are in fact victims. When the state fails to provide the basic ingredients of a prosperous life, there is nothing to prevent a poverty-stricken, disillusioned citizenry from turning against it. And those who feel abandoned by the state become ripe pickings for extremist or anarchic groups.... But Pakistan has managed to engineer the loss of a generation of its own children. Having followed ill-conceived strategies from disastrous notions of 'jihad' to confused education policies, it has created a generation that moved steadily towards the far side of the ideological right - even when not directly assimilated by extremist elements.... For every one Sulaiman, there are thousands others who were indoctrinated with ultra-right-wing, and potentially terrorist, leanings."

"Division Among Militants," an op-ed by Waqar Ahmed in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/15)

"Some media reports have revealed intercepted conversation among the commanders of the militants, which shows that they have been completely demoralized in resisting the army. High-ranking commanders of the insurgents are threatening their own fighters in desperation.... However, there are a number of reasons which have brought about a division among the militants. The local people became fed up with the criminal activities of the Taliban like beheadings, kidnappings and especially their tactics of torturing innocent people.... The brutality of the Taliban was such that close to three million people fled their homes, choosing to stay in camps rather than under the Taliban. As things stand now, the Taliban are no longer in a position to misuse and exploit Jihad in organizing the insurgents. Unlike the militants, Pakistan's armed forces have been fully supported by the people of Pakistan."

"The Cost Of War," an op-ed by Talat Masood in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/15)

"There is no doubt that deciding to join the war on terror led to substantial flow of U.S. and international assistance from individual countries and donor agencies and did contribute for a while in bringing about macroeconomic stability and increased growth rates.... What is however seldom realized internationally or by domestic audience that the cost of war that Pakistan had to bear and continues to bear is many times more than the aid that it has received so far.... With expanding insurgency in tribal belt and increasing acts of terrorism in Pakistan the direct and indirect costs are growing exponentially.... Despite the huge cost of war

the results until recently were not very encouraging... The question on the mind of every one today is what is it we want to achieve in the end."

"Words Need Action," an op-ed by Ayaz Ahmed Pirzada in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (06/15)

"The Muslim world is now willing to listen to proposed solutions to the problems Mr. Obama mentioned, and the onus is on the United States to provide them. Pakistanis did not have to scratch their heads to decipher as to what was for them in the speech. There was none except reiteration of American aid package to Pakistan and bracketing it with Afghanistan in efforts to fight against terrorists."

"The Storm Of Extremism And Fundamentalism In India," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (06/15)

"According to reports in the western media, the trend towards extremism and fundamentalism in India is stronger than in Pakistan.... India is beset not only by caste and ethnic divisions, with separatist movements in several provinces, but is racked by atrocities against Muslims, Christians and low-caste Hindus. If these atrocities continue, it would be dangerous not only for the region but also the entire world."

"A Balanced Budget In The Given Situation," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (06/15)

"The Federal Budget for the fiscal year 2009-10 with a consolidated outlay of Rupees 2.89 trillion presented in very difficult economic situation appears to be a bold exercise on the part of the elected government to revive the economy with record allocations for the Public Sector Development Program, takes care of the poor segments of the society and aimed at generating resources to meet the expenditures.... Though the country is in the grip of despondency in the sake of the ongoing militancy and gloomy economic scenario, the budget represents the determination of the government that it has the ability to move ahead with a vision and sound planning and not ready to bog down."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)  
Patterson